



Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

Citizenship and
Immigration Canada



FOCUS

Integration • Inclusion

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For a fair and welcoming French-language community in Ontario

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To respond to the articles published
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La Passerelle I.D.É. is a nonprofit
organization created to respond to the
integration and economic development
needs of young Francophones from the
various cultural communities of Greater
Toronto. Founded in 1993, La Passerelle
is recognized within the French-speaking
community for its leadership and its
stand on issues and matters affecting its
clientele.

To consult calls for proposals issued by
Citizenship and Immigration Canada,
Settlement Directorate, Ontario Region,
visit www.etablissement.org.

About ... Commitment

The Francophone presence in Ontario dates back more than 350 years. The province's Francophone population, which numbers 548,940, is Canada's largest Francophone community outside Quebec.

The Ontario Government recognizes the contribution that this population has made to the province's historical, cultural and linguistic heritage, and is committed to its preservation for the benefit of future generations. Ontario's commitment takes many different forms including the following:

- ▶ Creation of the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner;
- ▶ Designation of new service areas (Kingston, Brampton and Callander);
- ▶ Participation in major events such as the *Sommets de la Francophonie* to improve the visibility of the Franco-Ontarian community on the international stage;
- ▶ Establishment of a French Language Institute for Professional Development in the justice sector
- ▶ Creation of French language legal clinics;
- ▶ Implementation of the Language Planning Policy;
- ▶ Self-governance for TFO (French language educational television);
- ▶ Significant investments in French language education;
- ▶ Creation of advisory boards on the provision of French language services in the areas of health care and post-secondary education.

Over 20 years ago, the Government of Ontario recognized the need to provide services in French to its Francophone population, and adopted the French Language Services Act. This act enables any resident who requests it to be served in the French language in all headquarters and central offices of provincial ministries and agencies, as well as most offices of government ministries and agencies located in the 25 designated areas of Ontario.

The Government of Ontario's commitment goes beyond offering services in the French language. It aims to ensure that the Franco-Ontarian community will not only survive, but thrive.

In recent years, two important elements, the *Société franco-manitobaine's* strategy entitled *Expanding the Francophone Presence in Manitoba*, and a 2002 study by the Commissioner of Official Languages, both underscored the importance of Francophone immigration for official language minority communities. Subsequently, the Immigration Act was amended to give greater recognition to immigrants who speak the French language.

Since 2003, the Office of Francophone Affairs has focused its attention on Francophone immigration, working closely with other provincial ministries—Citizenship and Immigration, Education, as well as Training, Colleges, and Universities—in order to ensure that programs and policies enhance the settlement and integration process of immigrants into the Franco-Ontarian community.

On a personal note, let me add that my training in environmental sciences has taught me that diversity is an ecological necessity truly indispensable to the wealth and strength of any natural environment. It seems natural to me that any social environment stands to be enriched by the diversity of its members, much like the Franco-Ontarian community, whose numbers, diversity and talent base are expanding thanks to newcomers who have chosen to make Ontario their home.

Serge Bastien
Senior Policy and Research Analyst
Office of Francophone Affairs

*Member of the Francophone Minority
Communities Immigration Steering Committee
— Ontario Region*

Promotion and Recruitment

Destination Canada

As its name suggests, the *Destination Canada* Forum promotes our country to skilled workers interested in immigrating on a temporary or permanent basis.

The event, organized by the Canadian Embassy in Paris, has grown in stature since its launch in 2003. The first Destination Canada event boasted four participating provinces, then seven in 2005, and eight in 2006. At the last event held in November 2007, all Canadian provinces were represented as well as two territories.

The 2007 Canadian delegation had 88 participants representing different sectors of activity, including government (federal and provincial), education, as well as economic and community development. Among them was a new category of participants: 25 Canadian employers. Joining the delegation afforded them an opportunity to recruit qualified candidates abroad to fill a variety of positions in hotel management, the service industry, construction, manufacturing, translation, data processing, and aeronautics.

"The participation of employers reinforced Destination Canada's purpose as an effective means of conducting targeted recruitment to fill specific manpower and growth needs in Canadian communities," noted Louise Van Winkle, Public Service Director, Immigration Service at the Embassy of Canada in Paris.

Record number of visitors

In Paris as in Lyon and Brussels, Destination Canada 2007 was a resounding success, despite the transport strike in Paris. The event received twice as many visitors as the previous one.

More than 5,000 people registered online, well in excess of the event's capacity. Organizers saw this as an opportunity to handpick participants: only specialized candidates in

trades with manpower shortages in Canada and those more likely to satisfy the permanent resident visa criteria were invited to attend. As a result, the 2,400 participants who ended up being selected not only had the right profile, they were also much more motivated.

The day's events

The day kicked off with a presentation by immigration representatives and officials at the Embassy of Canada in Paris. The topic: administrative requirements interested candidates must fulfil in order to obtain a temporary work permit, or a permanent resident visa. Next, a round-table presentation was held to highlight each of the provinces and territories in turn. Candidates were then invited to tour information booths to find out more about a province or territory of particular interest to them.

"There was a long lineup at our table, and to meet everyone in line, we had to limit individual meetings to five minutes. People were not only interested, they were excited to be there," observed Claudia Penalosa, Senior Business Consultant, Business Immigration Section, with the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

The Ontario delegation

The goal of the Ontario delegation was to promote their province's strongest attributes, which include its geography, economy, quality of life and cultural diversity, as well as to showcase the vitality of Franco-Ontarian communities. Special emphasis was placed on providing information about settlement and integration services and the labour market in cities with a large

or vibrant Francophone population such as Sudbury, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Windsor.

Candidates visiting the Ontario booth were especially interested in discussing recognition of their credentials and skills. "They were referred to the professional orders in Canada that govern their stated professions and to various web sites that provide information about Ontario. We also encouraged them to visit us to experience life here first-hand," added Ms. Penalosa.

For Axël Collion of La Passerelle I.D.É., one of the community organizations that joined the Ontario delegation, it was like going back to his roots. Born and bred in France, he landed in Toronto 18 months ago after obtaining a temporary work permit. He was very impressed by the quality of the candidates he met. "These are highly qualified unemployed young people who look to

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Canada as a land with great promise. They saw me as the embodiment of their dreams, proof that it is possible to immigrate to Canada.”

Coming soon

In September 2008, Erik Sadiki, Director of Espace Emploi International (EEI), and Julie Puglia in charge of Amériques at EEI, will tour

parts of Canada (specifically Ontario and the Atlantic provinces) to tell employers about recruitment opportunities in Europe in general, and France in particular.

The next Destination Canada 2008 event will be held on November 18 and 19 in Paris, on

November 21 in Brussels, and on November 24 in Toulouse. To find out more, send an email to paris-immigration@international.gc.ca, or visit www.destination-canada-forum-emploi.ca starting in June 2008.

Ontario's Pilot Provincial Nominee Program

Linking immigrant skills to employer needs

Ontario's new pilot Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is making it easier for employers looking for skilled immigrants to meet their labour needs by putting them on the fast-track to permanent residency.

The program allows Ontario employers to fill permanent positions more quickly in the health care, education, manufacturing and construction sectors with skilled immigrants, whether they are already in Canada legally or abroad. Another function of the program is to assist multinational corporations looking to set up or expand operations in the province to recruit qualified employees from overseas.

Program expansion

On February 12, 2008, the PNP was expanded to include more international students and smaller employers operating outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Greater number of international students now eligible

The program is now open to international students Canada-wide who have a job offer from an Ontario employer for a position related to their field of study. Previously, only international students studying in Ontario with job offers in select trades and professions were eligible.

Smaller employers outside of GTA now eligible

Now, employers outside the GTA with \$500,000 in revenue and three full-time employees are eligible to participate in the program, compared with the previous

requirement of \$1 million in revenue and five employees. The program acknowledges the realities and scale of doing business in smaller urban centres. With the PNP's expansion, regional communities will have more opportunity to share in the economic benefits of immigration.

How the program works

The pilot PNP is employer-driven. Individuals – including international students – must receive a job offer from a pre-approved employer before they can apply to the program.

Employers apply to the program to have positions approved. Once approval is granted, recruits with the relevant education, training and experience selected for these positions apply to the program.

The province then nominates the recruit to Citizenship and Immigration Canada to fast-track permanent residence. The process is completed in an average nine to twelve months.

The pilot PNP links immigration to the economic needs of Ontario. Moreover, it will help support investment in the province and give Ontario employers a competitive edge in the global competition for talent, investment and jobs.

For more information about Ontario's Pilot Provincial Nominee Program, visit www.ontarioimmigration.ca/english/pnp.asp or call toll free 1-866-214-6820.



Francophone Communities:

A matching program to facilitate integration

Anyone who has ever had to join a new neighbourhood, community or environment knows that it takes time. Time to build a network from scratch. Time to get to know the new environment. Time to fit in and grow comfortable. For people who seek a brand new life in a completely different country, the adaptation period is even longer. It's not just that the rules are different; it's that everything is different.

Toronto's Centre francophone has come up with a solution to break the isolation felt by new immigrants and help them adapt more easily to their new surroundings, the HOST program. This program matches them up with experienced immigrants, people who are already well-established in the Toronto community and can provide the support they need during the settlement phase.

The English-language component of the program (titled the Host Program) has been running in Ontario for more than 20 years. The Centre francophone has been offering it for five years now. It was one of the first such programs to be launched in the province. More than 100 matches are done each year.

What makes the matching formula so effective is the philosophy behind the program. The idea is that one person, the volunteer living in Toronto, and the other, the newcomer, have something to offer each other and can both benefit from the experience, even though their role and responsibilities are different.

Established volunteers

The program matches newcomers with volunteers who have been living in Toronto for at least three years, are citizens or permanent residents, and have no criminal record. In 75% of cases, the established volunteers were immigrants themselves, so they know full well what it means to move to a new country. These individuals tend to be very open-minded and to view differences as a plus.

Apart from these qualities and criteria, each volunteer brings something special to the matching experience. For some, it is simply the desire to help someone. For others, it is an opportunity to practise speaking the French

language, to discover a new culture, to explore the city, or simply to enjoy the company of others.

Newcomer volunteers

They are generally individuals aged between 25 and 44, who have been living in Toronto for six months or less. They may be individuals living alone, or families looking to be in contact with another family. What they all share is a common desire to know more about Canadian life and customs.

First, the age group is taken into account as well as where the persons live, their interests and personalities. Next, each potential participant is given the other candidate's profile. This is normally done over the phone. If both parties agree to meet, the first meeting is usually held in a neutral setting, such as a restaurant, in the presence of a staff member from the Centre francophone de Toronto.

At the meeting, the newly matched participants are encouraged to keep in touch with each other once a week. Basic rules of conduct are also spelled out to avoid misunderstandings that may arise due to cultural differences. For example, it is clearly established at the outset that each individual pays his own way, and that any information exchanged remains confidential. Mutual respect is key to a successful matching.

It is then up to the matched individuals to decide what activities they want to do together. They have lots of options. For example, they could visit the library, do grocery shopping, participate in outdoor activities, enrol their children in a neighbourhood community program, or take the whole family to a show. A staff member from the Centre francophone de Toronto touches base with them by phone once a month. Matches last anywhere from four to six months.

"The goal is to help newcomers find the tools they need to carve out their own identity in their new world. We help them figure out what's what and point them in the right direction, or show them where to find the resources they need," says Marisa Galfusa, HOST Program Coordinator at the Centre francophone de Toronto.



Toronto's Centre francophone has come up with a solution to break the isolation felt by new immigrants and help them adapt more easily to their new surroundings, the HOST program.

Results

Newcomers have access to vital information and can count on moral support through regular exchanges with another person who has made the same journey. "It often happens that HOST participants become friends, because they inevitably develop close ties over the months.

In many ways, the established volunteer serves as a guide, helping the newcomer see how and where he can put down roots in the host community. For both the newcomer and the established immigrant, the matching experience is equally rewarding," adds Ms Gelfusa.

Economy - Jobs - Recognition

Destination Profession

A great many specialized workers who immigrate to Canada are highly qualified and have vast work experience. Their goal once they are settled is to work in the trade they practised in their home country. But despite their high level of training, skill, and experience, few of them manage to find gainful employment in their area of expertise.

For newcomers who find themselves in this situation, the journey ahead is a veritable obstacle course. Their only option at this point, if they want to survive, is to take a job, any job, more often than not one that requires skills far below their abilities and talents.

This is exactly why Collège Boréal set up the Destination Profession program. This 30-week multidisciplinary training program has been available in Hamilton and Toronto since May 2007.

“Our program is designed to inform, equip, support, and guide French-speaking immigrants who are trained abroad,” explains Diane Dubois, Collège Boréal’s Director of Community and Corporate Services in Southwestern Ontario. “Because they speak French, they must grapple with an even greater challenge of integration, owing mainly to the language barrier, non-recognition of their skills, and their own lack of understanding of the Canadian labour market.”

The training is aimed at helping immigrants achieve the five cornerstones of employability:

1

Mastery of English

For French-speaking immigrant professionals, this is the starting point of the program. They have to master spoken and written English in order to secure a job and succeed in their profession. They need it to take examinations, obtain a licence to practise from a professional order, and take refresher courses. English courses focus on workplace language, which enables participants to acquire the vocabulary specific to their profession.

2

Knowledge of Canadian requirements

Participants are made aware of and prepared for the requirements of the Canadian workplace. They learn about the skills, qualities, and abilities sought by employers, as well as human relations and networking in the workplace.

3

Recognition of professional accreditation

Support is provided to participants who must take compulsory steps to obtain professional accreditation and certification. Representatives of certifying bodies are even invited to give talks about their requirements and the steps immigrants must take in order to practise their profession successfully in Canada.

4

Acquisition of Canadian work experience

In a four-week traineeship that takes place under the supervision of a mentor, each participant acquires experience in the Canadian workplace, one of the keys to finding gainful employment in their profession.

5

Preparation for job hunting

A personalized training segment focuses entirely on job hunting, i.e., helping participants to write a cover letter, prepare a résumé, ace the interview process, access relevant resources, and develop effective job hunting strategies and techniques.



To date, 50 participants have signed up, including engineers, accountants, lawyers, nurses, agronomists, meteorologists, and teachers. They hail from all over, including Chad, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Morocco, Central African Republic and Haiti. In some cases, confidence and self-esteem have been shaken because of difficulties encountered in the job market.

"Statistics tell us that 60% of professionals who immigrate to Canada do not work in their area of expertise. Non-recognition of their credentials, and the fact that they are underemployed, are not only difficult for them to accept, but result in a huge loss of earnings estimated at 3.4 to 5 billion dollars per year. This is why programs like Destination Profession are needed," notes Diane Dubois.

The training program is relatively new, but already it is producing significant results. Satisfaction levels among both participants and employers are very high.

"All employers, mentors and supervisors who have dealt with students during their traineeship can attest to their professionalism and know-how. So much so that six of them were hired upon completing their traineeship," adds Gisèle Dupuis, Regional Head at Collège Boréal for the Hamilton region.

The Destination Profession program is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Destination: the practice of law

Jeanne Gatoto, a native of Burundi aged 39 years, mother of three children and lawyer by profession with eight years of experience, immigrated to Canada in 2005.

When she arrived, consultations with various people about the steps she would have to take in order to practise her profession in Canada left her discouraged.

Instead, she signed up for training as a personnel support services officer. After a three-month traineeship, she obtained her certificate, but soon realized that this new line of work was not for her.

In July 2007, she learned about the *Destination Profession* program and decided to enroll. During her training, a lawyer came to speak to her group about his own experience as a newcomer in 2003. His story about the challenges he faced inspired Jeanne.

When her turn for a traineeship came up, she was accepted into a law firm. At the end of her traineeship, her mentor, impressed by her mastery of English, her enthusiasm, drive and thirst for knowledge, offered her a job on the spot. They now work side by side preparing cases.

Very soon, Jeanne plans to take a course in order to comply with the certification requirements of her chosen profession, the law.

Jeanne Gatoto is a true success story.


another winning initiative from

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Collège Boréal
www.boreal.ca

Destination profession



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Regionalization

Eastern Network: Making great strides

When it was created in March 2002, the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Steering Committee for Francophone Minority Communities wanted to ensure it would have deep community roots.

In Ontario, this was accomplished by setting up the Sub-Committee for Francophone Minority Communities and issuing a call for proposals, which led to the establishment of three regional networks. The mandate of these networks is to facilitate the settlement, integration and retention of French-speaking immigrants in Eastern, Southwestern, and Northern Ontario.

The Eastern Network was the first to be created. Its creation was spearheaded by the Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (ESCOC), an agency involved for over 15 years in providing services to newcomers.

The Eastern Network quickly went into action. In the spring of 2007, it held a major forum in Ottawa, bringing together representatives of some 50 agencies. Immigrant communities were well represented as were Francophone newcomers. The main focus of the forum was to plot a course of action in step with the five

objectives set out in the Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities, i.e. to:

1. Increase the number of French-speaking immigrants to give more demographic weight to Francophone minority communities.
2. Improve the capacity of Francophone minority communities to receive Francophone newcomers and to strengthen their reception and settlement infrastructures.
3. Ensure the economic integration of French-speaking immigrants into Canadian society and into Francophone minority communities in particular.
4. Ensure the social and cultural integration of French-speaking immigrants into Canadian society and into Francophone minority communities.
5. Foster regionalization of Francophone immigration outside Toronto and Vancouver.

The Network does not provide settlement services. Rather, it seeks to involve communities as a whole in a broad consultation process, in addition to gathering information on the ground, identifying viable projects, and providing sound advice to the National Steering Committee and the Ontario Sub-Committee.

“The Network in itself is quite an innovative concept, because it facilitates collaboration between the various local players while promoting partnerships among them,” asserts coordinator Saint-Phard Désir. These partnerships may extend to the regional level, which helps us to develop a global vision of the immigration issue that encompasses the entire Eastern Region.”

From the outset, local committees supported by Network staff were set up in Ottawa, Cornwall, and Kingston. These committees are made up of representatives of various sectors including settlement services for immigrants, school boards, post-secondary institutions such as the University of Ottawa and La Cité collégiale, cultural centres, legal clinics, regional Franco-Ontarian community advocacy organizations and business groups.

Full steam ahead

Some 90 participants attended the Network’s forum in May 2007. The event—the first of its kind—led to the identification of more than 100 initiatives, projects and actions, all





The latest from the Central and Southwestern Network

In Central and Southwestern Ontario, the activities calendar is jam-packed. Following the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment among French-speaking immigrants of the Niagara Region, the Network organized not one, but two consultative forums, one for the London region and the other for the Niagara region. Then, on February 29, 2008, it held its very first regional forum.

The theme of the forum, Francophone Immigration: results and prospects in Southwestern Ontario, attracted a large number of participants. More than 120 persons representing the three regions served by the Network were in attendance to review major issues and challenges linked to Francophone immigration in the area of health care, education and employment. Discussions led to some interesting proposals, which were presented in the form of recommendations.

According to Network Coordinator Alain Dobi, the forum was so successful that there are now plans to hold a second edition next year.

Eastern Network: Making great strides (cont.)

geared toward achieving the five objectives set out in the Strategic Framework, both locally and regionally, by 2011.

For example, there is a plan to promote the creation of settlement networks and public awareness initiatives within the host community. Other proposals call for the creation of sponsoring clubs, school involvement, and initiatives to engage employers and youth through new scholarships as well as mentoring and leadership development activities among others.

Current activities

The Eastern Network is currently concentrating on community development in areas such as leadership, communication and project management for the benefit of organizations dedicated to providing settlement services. The Network also aims to foster the creation of partnerships in support of community projects tied to immigration issues.

For Pierre Dadjo, Executive Director of the Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CÉSOC), the situation can be summed up this way:

"All organizations, all stakeholders are committed to working for immigrants. That much is clear. Now, what we have to do is take the next step which entails working with immigrants."

That is also the focus of the Eastern Network, which is hosting an awareness-raising activity in May 2008 to build understanding of the challenges of immigration within the host community. This is an opportunity for French-language organizations to gain new knowledge and insight thanks to the lessons learned by their English-language counterparts, which have greater experience in the area of immigration settlement.

Your Comments

"I read the first issue of Focus with interest, and I find it is very well done. The text, pictures, vivid colours... I can say that I am proud of the product. It is very professional. However, I find that the you only skim the surface of the topics, leaving the reader thirsty for information. In future issues I suggest that you go into more depth, short of actually doing a scientific study. Overall, the FOCUS bulletin is a very good resource for subjects like this."
- W. Romulus Oakville, Ontario

"This bulletin is perfection itself: the content is very relevant and the images reach out and grab you. Altogether a professional publication. I would encourage people to pay attention to it. It's a real labour of love. Excellent!"
- Justine Gogoua, Canafic Théâtre

"In my opinion, Focus is a totally unique publication. The colours are eye-pleasing and I found myself reading and rereading. I must say that the content is timely and important for all us immigrants. I would want to keep all the issues of Focus that are published as if they were collectors' items. Excellent and impeccable—the only way to describe this truly valuable magazine. Bravo and congratulations to La Passerelle."
- Alain Keutch, Executive Director
Centre de Développement Économique et Social du grand Toronto



Activities of the Northern Network

The Northern Network began operating in November 2007. Its mandate calls for several major initiatives, beginning with a series of meetings with representatives of various regions including Sudbury, Muskoka and Parry Sound, North Bay, Nipissing, Timiskaming, Sturgeon Falls, Thunder Bay, the northwestern counties, Geraldton, Longlac, Marathon, Wawa, Timmins, Hearst, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Sault Ste. Marie, and Elliot Lake. These strategic meetings will present an opportunity to brainstorm various ways of achieving the five objectives set out in the Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities.

Two meetings have already been held, one in Sudbury in December 2007 and the other in Timmins in February 2008. Together, meeting participants:

- ▶ Clearly defined the challenges in their region;
- ▶ Identified potential partners in key sectors;
- ▶ Mapped out realistic strategies;
- ▶ Formulated recommendations towards achieving successful Francophone immigration in both Sudbury and Timmins.

Three more strategic meetings are planned, one in Thunder Bay in February 2008, the next in North Bay in March 2008, and the third in Sault-Ste. Marie later that same month, followed by a forum on March 29, 2008.

Hélène Kouadio
Coordinator of the Northern Network



Your Comments

First of all, congratulations to La Passerelle for taking on the task of producing this publication.

FOCUS presents an excellent review of the various initiatives taken to date to help immigrants settle in the province. It has been shown that these newcomers require front-line welcome services in French. Facilitating their integration starts with this first contact. We need much more than bilingual forms at a service counter. The person at the counter also has to speak French. FOCUS highlights the challenges French-speaking immigrants must face, including the challenge of language, in itself the main challenge for any family wishing to settle in a province like Ontario.

Lastly, the graphic design and layout of FOCUS facilitate navigation and make reading a pleasure. This publication is both a resource for new French-speaking immigrants, and a reference and basis upon which we can build more proactive, quality services in French that target the needs of French-language ethnic and cultural communities in Ontario.

The Office of the French Language Services Commissioner is pleased that this publication is now available to our communities.

- François Boileau
Ontario French Language Services Commissioner

Helpful Links

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada:
www.cic.gc.ca
- Government of Ontario:
www.ontarioimmigration.ca/index.asp
- etablissement.org, (information and resources for immigrants in Ontario)
- Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities, November 2003: www.cic.gc.ca/francais/ressources/publications/etablissement/cadre-minoritaire.asp
- Strategic Plan To Foster Immigration To Francophone Minority Communities, September 2006: www.cic.gc.ca/FRANCAIS/ressources/publications/etablissement/plan-minoritaires.asp
- Le Réseau de l'Est de L'Ontario:
www.cesoc.ca/fr/reseau.htm
- Le Réseau du Centre-Sud-Ouest:
www.centredesantecommunautaire.com/Reseau.htm

Testimonial

Lise Routhier-Boudreau



Last year, I had the privilege of chairing the *Sommet des communautés francophones et acadienne*. At this historic Summit, Francophone participants, united in their desire to live in French, adopted a unifying, bold vision of their future, and together plotted a course for their continued development over the next decade.

This Summit also acknowledged the plurality of Canada's *francophonie*, now defined not only by Francophone members born and bred in this country, but also by all those individuals who choose to communicate and live in the French language. This new conception of the *francophonie* is more respectful of cultural, religious and ethnic differences and more inclusive, making room for French-speaking individuals of all origins, as well as those who have learned the French language.

The issue of diversity is, and must remain, a focus of our attention. How far we have come in such little time!

We often forget that immigration to Francophone and Acadian communities is a fairly recent phenomenon. The Dialogue initiative, spearheaded by Canada's *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes (FCFA)* in 2000, shifted the focus when it highlighted the importance of immigration for the prosperity of Francophone minority communities, and the need to open up our ranks to French-speaking newcomers.

Two years later, the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Steering Committee for Francophone Minority Communities was formed. Thanks to support from the Action Plan for Official Languages, a series of networks and structures have gradually been set up at the local and provincial / territory levels to promote the recruitment, integration and retention of immigrants into our communities.

Not surprisingly, when strategies to increase the demographic weight of our communities were discussed at the Summit, immigration and cultural diversity were central among the concerns. This has produced strategic results in important areas such as our ability and capacity to welcome newcomers, to integrate and involve them through settlement infrastructure and guidance, and to share a French identity that respects diversity of origin and culture.

But the challenge of immigration goes far beyond the issue of demographic weight. Immigration is an important component of other projects discussed at the Summit. These include increasing our communities' ability and capacity to live in French by means of a range of services and activities as well as their capacity to organize and mobilize, to strengthen and stimulate their economic development.

In fact, one of the major issues that can impact the future of French-speaking and Acadian communities is human capital. The 2006 census data show that the Canadian population is aging, and many facets of Canadian society—including the Francophone network that stretches across our country—will face serious manpower shortages. The future vitality of communities, which includes quality services in such areas as education, health care and childhood services, depends on whether we can formulate—starting right now—strategies to recruit and retain skilled manpower to provide these services. In this context, the aptitudes and skills of French-speaking immigrants are of obvious interest, and recognition of their professional credentials and skills assumes special importance.

What this means is that much remains to be done. Continued investment is essential to consolidate communities' immigrant settlement and integration networks and expand our ability to promote and recruit internationally. We hope that the federal government's new official languages strategy will provide us with the means to achieve these objectives.

A few years ago, when the FCFA took a leadership role in the area of immigration, we knew that the journey would be a long one and that the issue would have to remain a priority focus for decades to come. So be it. On the one hand, we cannot artificially separate the vitality of French-speaking and Acadian communities from the issue of immigration. And on the other hand, immigration holds the promise of a stronger society ahead, a growing, evolving *francophonie* that is open and modern, that celebrates its diversity, and that derives strength from all those who, by joining us here, share in the rich heritage that is the French presence in America.

Lise Routhier-Boudreau
President

Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA) du Canada

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